THE CASE OF Peoples Duty In Living Under A Scandalous Minister, STATED and RESOLVED.

LONDON,
Printed for *Sam. Tidmarsh*, at the *Kings-Head* in *Cornhill*, near the *Royal Exchange*. 1684.

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In Living Under

A

Stanislaus Munster,

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A

Scandalous Miniſter.

Honoured Sir,

I Muſt needs acknowledge that Yours is indeed a moſt ſweet and pleaſant Seat, but there is this inward allay (as you ſay) to that outward Felicity, that your lot is caſt under a Scandalous Miniſter, your *Light is Darkneſs*, your *Salt hath loſt its Savour*, and your Tree of Life is guarded (as you complain) by an evil Angel. And now what courſe is to be taken? What muſt you do for your Souls health? This makes your dwelling *Meſhec* and your otherwiſe moſt delightful *Habitation*, as *among the Tents of* Kedar.

I could heartily wiſh you had asked my Opinion in a more pleaſing Subject, and that you had commanded me to ſpeak in a Cauſe wherein I might have more hopes of being heard, inſtead of this which is ſurrrounded with almoſt invincible prejudices. However, to comply with your importunity, I ſhall make bold to offer ſome few things in Anſwer to the Queſtion propounded by you.

1. If his Life be Notorious, make it yet more ſo by complaint; let his *Dioceſan* know it, and ſee to it that the Church Cenſures paſs upon him. The Laws are not ſo weak; nor yet their Adminiſtration ſo remiſs, but they will eaſe you and themſelves of ſuch a rotten Member; they will with-draw the fewel to his exorbitances, by ſuſpending the *Profits*, and diſable him from all publick taking Gods Word into his mouth, who hateth to be reform'd by ſuſpenſion from his *Office*: Nor need you be afraid of ſo doing, for all good Men will approve and applaud this your moſt Pious Zeal; they will thank and not upbraid you for it, and will even concur with you in the doing of it. Whereas it is on the other hand a great failing, that all the Neighbourhood almoſt will agree to tell the ſtory of ſuch a Miniſters miſcarriages and ſins to one another, and indeed in all Companies; but few or none have the courage or faithfulneſs to report it to ſuch as may and would remedy it. What ſhall they become *Informers*? As if that were a worſe name then *Whiſperers* or *Backbiters*. Shall they peal upon their Miniſters? Yes certainly, this would be the greater Charity; yea, this might prove a Charity indeed; for this might wound his Soul in order to his cure, while the other only wounds his good Name incurably; this may be a means to Reform him, whilſt the other ſerves only to blaſt his Reputation, and perhaps hardens him in his ſin; this Anſwers all the ends of Diſcipline, and roles the guilt from your

your ſelves and the Church, whilſt the other doth but gratifie ſome naughty vile affection in your ſelves and ethers: In a word, this makes for the glory of God, the other only to your Miniſters defamation and diſcredit. Provided your Proof be plain, and there appear no Deſign but what is good and honeſt at the bottom, I dare ſay, that ſuch as preſide in the Government, will both right and thank you.

2. But if your Miniſters failings be only now and then, a being meerly *over-taken with a fault*, and comes under the head of ſins of infirmity, methinks love might cover them, and a *ſpirit of meekneſs* might by degrees cure them; ſoft Words might melt his heart, and good Exhortations proceeding from ſincere and unfeigned affection, joyned with your own pregnant Example, might gain him to God, and make him your Convert inſtead of your becoming his. Are we commanded to exerciſe this point of Charity to every Brother, and not to our Miniſter? Or do we judge or conculde *him* leſs ſenſible of our affection and tenderneſs, than a rude and illiterate Neighbour? Or is he the only Man in all the Pariſh to be deſpaired of, whom no ſweetneſs can oblige, and no warnings work upon? Sir, Give me leave to tell you, that till this like method be eſſayed, and that more than once or twice, to win him, you have not diſcharged your Duty to God or to him. Perhaps he is not ſo bad as he is painted, report may have wronged him, you know this Age is eaſie to believe any thing that makes againſt the Miniſtry in general; ſome ſtudy to find or to makes faults where indeed there are none, others lay Temptations in their way purpoſely to make them fall, thinking by becoming privy to their failings, to make them fear to have the greater awe upon them, or to render them more pliant to all their politick ſecular Ends and Deſigns;

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at leaſt to juſtifie their own ſins by making them of the Company; or to ſilence the noiſe of their own guilty Conſciences, and ſalve their crazed Reputations, by appearing zealous for God and Goodneſs, in crying as loud as they can againſt them. Beſides Miniſters tell the People of their faults, and it is a kind of pleaſing revenge to ſome to find fault with them again. Nor muſt I forget their taking Tyth, which you know in this Sacrilegious Age is a moſt unpardonable crime, and a ſcandal ſufficient, that a Miniſter is a Gentleman and Rich, that he behaves himſelf like a Man, and will not diſfigure his face or effeminate his voice to humor a Party; who though they ſpoke a Miniſter never ſo holy, and never ſo powerful both in Life and Doctrine before, yet he forfeits all by keeping a Coach, or being made a Biſhop; which by the way, is a ſtrange confutation of that ſo much approved Doctrine of never falling from grace. Theſe Sir, are ſome of your own Obſervations in Diſcourſe betwixt you and I, and how often have I heard you ſay what Notice you have taken of ſome chief and leading Men in their Countrey, who have ſeemed never more delighted, at Market or ſuch like publick Meetings, then when they have fallen upon the Subject of reviling the Miniſtry? That Man being always the moſt welcome Companion, who could expoſe any of them moſt. Remember I beſeech you with what regret you have bewailed this thing to me, as a moſt unchriſtian and unſeemly Behaviour, as an infallible ſign of a moſt ulcerated rotten heart, and the effects of direct direful Atheiſm, void of all regard to God whoſe Miniſters they are, and void of common Civility or Chriſtian Charity, which ſhould teach them to hide, rather than with *Solomons* Character of a Fool, to *make a mock of ſin*. I am fully confident God will one day judge theſe jolly Men in earneſt,

earneſt, for all that paſtime they make of their poor Miniſters infirmities, which are indeed rather matters of Humiliation and Mourning to Men, who are any whit under the ſenſe and power of ſincere godlineſs. I had not called theſe Paſſages to your memory at this preſent, was it not that I am exceeding jealous for you, leſt any Practices of yours ſhould give any countenance or encouragement, to ſuch as ſet themſelves thus in the *ſeat of the ſcornful.*

3. But let it be granted, that your Miniſter is indeed ſcandalous: Yet this in my Opinion will not warrant you, in your deſigned purpoſe of leaving his Miniſtry. For,

1. Since you are ſo much offended and grieved with the Errors of his ſinful life, there is the leſs danger of infection, or getting any harm to your ſelf, by what you obſerve and cenſure in him. Your Souls health I am perſwaded, will never be impaired by thoſe ſins, which your Soul abhorreth: *Quibus mali placent in unione, ipſi Communicant malis. Quibus vero mali diſplacent, & eos emendare non poſſunt, non factis eorum, ſed Altari Chriſti Communicant.* Auguſtin. Epiſt. 162.

2. Since you ſay that your Miniſter is nevertheleſs a very excellent Preacher, which is not a thing impoſſible; I conceive your Wiſdom and Duty is to diſtinguiſh betwixt the good and the bad, to put a difference betwixt his Doctrine and his Life; for Gifts and Grace you know Sir are two different things, and a Man may have Gifts for the edification of others, and yet want Grace for himſelf. St. *Auguſtin* I am ſure makes a vaſt difference betwixt the viſible Miniſtry of the Word and Sacraments, and the inviſible Grace of God, in his Controverſy with the *Donatiſts* in this very Argument, as you ſhall ſee anon. And on *Matt.* 23. *Ideo audiuntur* (ſaith he) *utiliter*,

ter, qui etiam utiliter non agunt. And St. *Paul* ſuppoſeth that a Man may be a *Preacher unto others*, and yet *become a Caſt-away* himſelf, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27. We read in the Goſpel of an unfaithful and unjuſt Steward ſet over the Houſhold of God. It is further plain from *Luk.* 9. that *Judas* was ſent forth and commiſſioned with the reſt of Chriſts Diſciples. The holy Spirit chargeth the Biſhops of ſeveral of the Churches of *Aſia*, with ſundry heinous failings and ſins, and yet honoureth them with the glorious title of *Angels* of their reſpective Churches, *Rev.* 2. and 3. *Chap.* Yea our *Saviour* himſelf tells us *Mat.* 7. 22, 23. that many will be diſowned and condemned by him *as workers of Iniquity*, who yet *have propheſied, caſt out Devils, and done many wonderful Works in his Name.* From which it is plain that a graceleſs Perſon may have extraordinary gifts for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt: Thoſe holy perſons, ſuch as *Zachary*, and *Simeon*, *Anna*, *Mary*, and *Joſeph*, continued all along in the Communion of the Church of the Jews, whoſe Rulers were ſo vile as to ſlay the Prophets, and to kill thoſe that were ſent unto them from God. Yea we find our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* frequently in the Temple, attending upon the Miniſtration of the High Prieſts on their Solemn Feaſts, though generally in thoſe days they came into their places by bribery, were very bad Men and not qualified as the Law of *Moſes* required. We read likewiſe that it was the manner of our *Saviour Chriſt*, to enter into the Synagogue every Sabbath day, to hear the Scribes and Phariſees read and expound the Law, whoſe wicked lives he nevertheleſs moſt vehemently inveighs againſt upon all occaſions. You ſhall furthermore find our *Bleſſed Lord*, beſides his own Example and Practice, to give Directions to his Diſciples and the Multitude,

titude, in the very Caſe which is before us, *Mat.* 23. 1, 2, 3. ſaying, *The Scribes and Phariſees ſit in* Moſes's *his Seat; all therefore* (mark that) *whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do; but do not ye after their Works, for they ſay and do not.* What, hear theſe whom thou haſt denounced ſo many bitter woes againſt, even woe upon woe in this very Chapter? What the *Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites*, thoſe *blind Guides, whited Sepulchers; Graves that appear not?* That *bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born, and lay them upon other Mens ſhoulders, but they themſelves will not move them with one of their fingers*; that *ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*, that *neither go in themſelves, nor ſuffer them that are entring to go in*; that *devour Widows Houſes, and for a pretence make long Prayers*, &c. What, ſhall we that are thy Diſciples, and can hear ſuch a Heavenly Preacher as thou art, who ſpeakeſt *as never Man ſpake*, go to hear ſuch wretches as theſe? Yes, ſaith *Chriſt*, *They ſit in* Moſes's *Chair*, have the ſtamp of publick Warrant and Authority, therefore hear them: St. *Auguſtin* brings this Text of our *Saviour*, to prove the ſame Queſtion I am about, and to the ſame purpoſe. *Laicus enim qui vult bene vivere, cum attenderit Clericum malum, quid dicit? Dominus dixit: Quæ dicunt facite, quæ faciunt facere nolite. Ambulabo viam Domini, non ſequar iſtius mores; audiam ab illo, non verba ipſius ſed Dei. Sequar Deum, ſequatur ille cupiditatem ſuam.* Auguſtin. in Johan. c. 10. *Modo ea quæ ad Cathedram pertinent recta præcipiant*, ſaith St. *Hierom. Vult autem Dominis hunc ordinem Divinitus eſſe conſtitutum, ac proinde audiendam eſſe veritatem, etiam ex ore mercenariorum &*

hypocritarum doctorum; ſo the Learned Mr. *Beza* upon the Text. *Whereas the Prieſts were ſometimes ſimple, and ſometimes wicked Men, leſt any ſhould deſpiſe the Ordinance of God for their unworthineſs, the promiſe is made by God*, Numb. 6. 27. *And they ſhall put my Name upon the Children of* Iſrael, *and I will bleſs them*, ſaith Mr. *Amſworth.* Expoſitors all (all that ever I ſaw at leaſt) agree in this matter. I might alſo to ſtrengthen this, add the Teſtimony of the Ancient and other Modern Churches, but I ſhall content my ſelf with tranſcribing the 26th Article of the *Church of England*, ſaying, *Although in the viſible Church, the evil be ever mingled with the good, and ſometimes the evil have chief Authority in the Miniſtration of the Word and Sacraments: Yet, for as much as they do not the ſame in their own Name, but in Chriſts; and do Miniſter by his Commiſſion and Authority, we uſe their Miniſtry both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving the Sacraments: Neither is the effect of Chriſts Ordinance taken away by their wickedneſs, nor the grace of Gods gifts diminiſhed, from ſuch as by faith, and rightly do receive the Sacraments miniſtred unto them, which are effectual, becauſe of Chriſts inſtitution and promiſe, although they be miniſtred by evil Men.* To this Doctrine do all the beſt *Reformed Churches* agree, witneſs the *Harmony of their Confeſſions*: The contrary, unto which is the Doctrine of the *Papiſts*; and *Anabaptiſts*, and *Browniſts*, and *Family of Love*, with ſome others only of the moſt extravagant of the Diſſenting Parties, from the preſent eſtabliſhment. Our Lord Chriſt acknowledgeth the power even of *Pilate* over himſelf, and ſaith, *It was given him from above.*

If he be indeed your lawful Miniſter, ſent by them in Authority, and ſo ſettled by the Laws of the Land (as I know he is) this is interpretatively the Will of God, and your Duty ſeems to me to be plainly chalked out by the *Holy Apoſtle*; Heb. 13. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves: for they watch for your Souls, as they that muſt give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.* So alſo 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 12, 13. *And we beſeech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly for their work ſake.* Again, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. *Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double Honour, eſpecially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine.* But if ill, honour them nevertheleſs as Rulers, not only in point of Maintenance, but Eſteem, for ſo I conceive we may infer from the Text: Honour them for Gods ſake, as ſet over you in the Lord; for their Work ſake, as Watching for your Souls; for their Character ſake, as Elders and Rulers; for their Doom ſake, that they may be able to make *their Account with joy, and not with grief*; and for your own ſake, leſt the contrary Practice be *unprofitable for you.* For the Ordinances are Gods, their Efficacy is from God, and your Service herein is done to God, on purpoſe to confound all glorying in Man. St. *Paul* ſpeaks of ſome that *preached Chriſt out of envy, with purpoſe to add Affliction to his bonds*; Phil. 1. 15, 16, 17, &c. (who therefore muſt certainly be very bad men) yet ſince *Chriſt was preached, he therein did rejoyce, yea, and would rejoyce.* You do not think that the Morning and Evening Sacrifices under the Law were to be neglected, becauſe of the ſinfulneſs of

Elies Sons, or that their wickedneſs gave warrant to the people *to abhor the Offerings of the Lord.* St. *Paul* taxeth the *Corinthians*, for manifold Enormities and Sins in the receiving of the Lords Supper. And it is not unlikely, but the Miniſters might ſhare too much with the People in thoſe failings which were ſo prevailing and general; yet all his Arguments tend to the better qualifying themſelves to become more worthy Receivers: but by no means in the leaſt to the exempting them from that moſt neceſſary and moſt indiſpenſible Duty. I know you will ſay, you plead not to be excuſed from the Ordinances, but only for a liberty to hear ſome body elſe. But then, Sir, what becomes of that mutual Relation betwixt a Paſtor and his People, and of that mutual Obligation of Duty of each towards other? *How ſhall they hear without a Preacher?* ſaith St. *Paul.* And how ſhall they preach without Hearers? ſay I.

But you will again ſay, That ſome body will hear him if you do not; to which I reply, If your Principle be good and true, they ought not; and if the reſt follow your Example, who are a leading Man in the Pariſh, they will not.

Whence it follows, that the People are at liberty to go to whom and where they liſt, while the ſame Man, as you and I have known, ſhall leave the *Church* of *England* to go to the *Preſbyterians*, from thence to the *Independants*, thence to the *Anabaptiſts*, next to the *Quakers*, and at laſt caſt off all regard to the Worſhip of God. So true is that ſaying, *That Toleration in one Age is Atheiſm in the next, if not in the very ſame*; or that, *That the firſt ſtep to Apoſtacy is the forſaking of Publick Aſſemblies.*

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Conſidering all which, I am confident, all the worſt of Inconveniences from a Miniſter that is a bad Liver and yet teacheth well, are not worthy to be put in the Ballance with thoſe ſad and diſmal ones above-named, to which more might be added.

But, Sir, I am further to beſeech you to weigh ſeriouſly and without prejudice theſe following Conſiderations, with reſpect to the publick as well as to your ſelf.

1. That upon this very ſame Principle, that you think of leaving your Paſtor upon and his Communion, *viz.* Becauſe he is a wicked ſinful Liver; did *Donatus* found that lamentable and woful Schiſm, which did create ſo much diſturbance and miſery to the Church of Chriſt in St. *Auguſtine*'s time, and a long time after, I had almoſt ſaid ever ſince. And as it began in a ſad Schiſm, and was accompanied with manifold grievous Hereſies in the Church; ſo it went on with Commotions and Rebellions in the State: *Donatus* and his Faction, as they grew in power, denying Obedience and Conformity to the Publick Laws, upon the account that they were made and adminiſtred by wicked Men.

I would undertake for the truth of this ſad Example in each particular, if I thought that you either knew it not, or were ſo hardy as to deny it. But we need not look back ſo far, for it was this very Principle, which firſt ſet on foot, and after brought to paſs thoſe Barbarities, Outrages, and bloody Executions in *Germany* of later days. And in truth, that Doctrine which blew the Trumpet to our lamentable and unhappy Commotions here in *England*, both in Church and State. For Firſt, they began (as you well know) to traduce the *Biſhops* and whole *Clergy* as moſt ſinful and wicked

wicked Men, calling them *Idol*, *Idle Shepherds*; *dumb Dogs*; *ſwearing*, *drunken*, *unclean Prieſts*; *Incarnate Devils*, *Cogging*, *Cozening Knaves*; *Deſperate*, *formal Atheiſts*; *Robbers*, *Wolves*, &c. for the ſad Truth of all which with a great deal more, I need only to turn you to their publick Sermons, Libels, and *Centuries* which are now in Print, and ſome of which, even the moſt invective, have been lately re-printed.

Next, for the good King and his Government in the State; His *Sacred Majeſty King Charles the Firſt* was ſo ſenſible of the like hard Speeches and Prints, as he himſelf ſaith, *The worſt Effects of open Hoſtility came ſhort of thoſe deſigns: for I can more willingly loſe my Crown than my Credit, nor are my Kingdoms ſo dear to me, as my Reputation and Honour.* Again, *Theſe foul and falſe Aſperſions, were ſecret Engines at firſt employed againſt my peoples love of me, that undermining their Opinion and Value of me, my Enemies and theirs too, might at once blow up their Affections, and batter their Loyalty.*

Thus this Principle hatched up the Covenant for Reformation and more pure Religion, as was pretended, and that fed and maintained that long and bloody Civil War, which ended in the Ruin of *King* and *Laws*, *Religion* and *Church*, for a time. I had not revived the memory of theſe ſaid Truths, had it not been neceſſary to ſhew you what bad uſe deſigning Men make of this bad Principle; how under the appearance of Zeal againſt Sin and Jealouſie for God and his Glory, it carries them to all violation of Sacred Duty, and expoſeth all Perſons and Things that are Sacred, to all ſorts of moſt ungodly Outrages and Villanies; ſo eaſie a thing is it to find faults, and make Offenders, when partiality and preju-

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dice come to sit upon the Bench, God help the Innocent.

Donatus and his Party, after his Example, refused Communion with *Cæcilianus* then *Bishop of Carthage*, because he was as they said a *Traditor* (*i. e.* had in times of Persecution delivered up the Bible to be burnt) denying therefore to hear him preach, or to receive the Sacraments at his hands. But when after a full hearing before *Constantine the Great*, together with a great number of Bishops for that purpose assembled, he was purged from the Slander, and declared guiltless; then *Donatus* and his Faction said, he had been ordained by *Felix* who was a *Traditor*; therefore his Ordination was null and void, and this is made guilt enough to justifie their defection.

Pope Hildebrand Decreed and Commanded, *That no man should hear Mass from the mouth of a Priest that had a Wife.*

The *Rhemists* further say, *That the Sermons of Heretiks* (and so they term all Protestants) *must not be heard though they preach the Truth; their Prayers and Sacraments are not acceptable to God, but are the howlings of Wolves.*

And our Modern Dissenters will teach you, That if a Minister conform to the Laws of the Church, and read the Common Prayer, he is also not to be heard, or the Sacraments received from him.

At this rate, Sir, who is Innocent? Whither will you go? Who shall be your Pastor? Or will you have none? At this rate you may separate and separate from all the Churches, and from all the Men in the World, till you come to abhor your own *dear self*; for what Man is there that lives and is not a great Sinner? And sure I am, you would be loth that your Wife, and Children,

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and Servants ſhould rebound this Argument upon you, and plead Exemption from their known reſpective Duties, upon the pretence that you are a ſinful Man: for if you rightly conſider it, the dint of the Argument will hold good againſt Parents and Maſters of Families, as well as againſt Magiſtrates and Miniſters, and then farewel all Order and Government in the World.

No, Sir, Government is a Sacred thing, and an Ordinance of God, and ſo are Governours as ſuch, whatſoever they are in their private, perſonal capacity. And was I to give account in ſhort, of that ſhameful diſobedience and ſtubborneſs in Children; that perverſeneſs, ſelf-will, and unfaithfulneſs in Servants, generally complained of by Parents and Maſters of Families at this day, I ſhould aſcribe it to the want of that reverence and regard, which God expects from us, towards them that Rule over us both in Church and State. Men may read their Sin in their Puniſhment, while their Conſciences will tell them, that they are but paid in their own kind, meaſure for meaſure; and that they have furniſhed their Children and Servants with Proofs and Examples againſt themſelves.

2. Next to the publick Security, I muſt offer to you the Conſideration of your private peace, which is in danger to be loſt by ſuch raſh defiance to your Miniſter.

For the Laws are on his ſide, as long as he performs his Duty according as they have Enacted; and if he be either a man of Stomach, or ſhall think himſelf bound to put the Laws in force againſt you, this will make your life uneaſie to you, will ſowre your temper otherwiſe never ſo ſweet; will ruffle your Spirit, ſtir up all your paſſions, and at laſt provoke you moſt inſenſibly,

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to some Indecencies against him both in Word and Deed.

And let me tell you, Sir, you will certainly find it a most uncomfortable thing to live at variance with your Pastor, a vexation like to that which the *Wise Man* calls a *Continual Dropping*. Besides that, it will mightily prejudice you against all his Doctrines, though never so sound and good, as often as you shall hear him. For it is necessary the Word be *received with meekness*, or else it will never profit you, since *the wrath of Man cannot work the righteousness of God*. It will prejudice you against his Person, prejudice you against his very Name and Mention; it will so every way prejudice the present healthful Constitution of your own Soul, as instead of Cure, you will unavoidably fall into those Diseases which you seek to prevent. Not to say any thing of what hazard your Estate may run in a Case which so nearly concerns your Soul: for in my most deliberate thoughts, I had rather you should quit your present Station, as pleasant as it is, and in the strength of *Abrahams* Faith, seek a *Land of Promise* and Blessing from God, than live where you do at variance with your Minister, which hath neither Promise nor Blessing belonging to it.

3. It is also matter of discredit in the Eye of the World: for men are not yet so wholly devoid of all respect to God, but they will in heart bear some secret regard to their Minister for Gods sake, and to his Office, for either love or fear of Laws and Government under which he serveth.

These things have a great awe over the Minds and Consciences of Men, and carry such a strange unac-

countable sway with them, as you must be a Man of extraordinary Credit and Influence, not to say Confidence, to think to over-bear them. Such hath been the constant Reverence, and so great, which the meer light of Nature hath taught the worst of Heathens to shew and express towards the Ministers of their Idol gods; which is certainly much rather due to such as minister at the Altar of the only Great and True God. *Fear the Lord with all thy Soul* (saith the Son of *Syrac*, Ecclesiasticus 7. 29.) *and reverence his Priests. Fear the Lord, and Honour the Priest*; ver. 30. It is also a Wise Rule which the same Author lays down *Chap.* 19. v. 8, 9. Saying, *Whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other Mens lives, and if thou canst without offence, reveal them not, for he heard and observed thee, and when time cometh, he will hate thee.* When St. *Paul* had unadvisedly reviled *Ananias* that most corrupt and wicked High Priest, he corrects himself, saying, *I wist not, Brethren, that he was the High Priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the Ruler of thy people*; Acts 23. 4, 5.

4. I might also press the consideration of that ill use which the more ignorant or more wicked in your Town and Neighbourhood would make of your Example, to wander at large like *Sheep without a Shepherd*; or to stay at home and go no where, or to keep the Sabbath at the Tavern or Ale-house, instead of Feasting together at the Table of the Lord: together with those sad consequences to your own Family, while you it may be go one way, and your Wife another, and your Children and Servants pretend to Worship each and all of them in a way by themselves; to the gradual ruin of all Peace and Piety in your Family, in the room of mutual

tual Edification and Comfort. But I know a word to the Wise is sufficient, and I am minded to have done.

Wherefore, Sir, were I worthy to be listened to, I would advise you should abide in the Station wherein God hath placed you, sitting down with quiet and thankfulness under the use of such means as his gracious Providence hath afforded you; doing your own Duty to God, in a constant diligent Attendance upon his publick Ordinances, and to your lawful Minister for the sake of God. You may countenance him in his Office, and yet discourage him in his Sins. The worse he is, pray the more for him, and talk less against him, but take more pains with him to recover him; and if nothing will do, wait with patience till God put you under some milder and more comfortable Dispensation, by removing him one way or other from amongst you, and sending you a better in his place. Which thing I am confident God will do for you in his good time, if he see you thus to deny your self, in meer obedience to him, by casting your self and cause upon him, and wholly referring it to him; free from all indirect projects and practices of your own, which may argue your being dissatisfied with the present provision which he hath made.

In the mean while, if you edifie by your Minister in nothing else, this exercise of Faith, and Patience, and Meekness, and Love, and Unity, and Uniformity, will become far better Evidence of your real Edification and growth in Grace, than any you will be able to produce in the contrary course. For whoever they

be that minister to your Lusts or Passions, or meerly to a Party, will never minister truly to your Edification. And indeed woe to this present World, that Mens growth in Grace should be measured by their heats and contentions about indifferent things, by being ready to quarrel at the times, and to arraign the actions of Superiors, and Governours in Church and State, by being always complaining of the miscarriages of other Men, but especially Ministers; as if all the title Men had to vertue in themselves, consisted in a certain delight which they took, in repeating and proclaiming other Mens vices: which is such a kind of Edifying as Infernal Spirits boast of, and which is indeed only proper to the Accuser of the Brethren, did Men rightly consider it. *Where envy and strife is*, saith the *holy Apostle*, Jam. 3. 16. *there is confusion and every evil work*; as also that this sort of *Wisdome* is from beneath, even *earthly, sensual, devilish*, v. 15.

Because I fore-see and know the Consequences of these things, both in reference to the publick, and your private Peace, to the rending the Church and your own Soul asunder, I am therefore concerned to warn you against every thing that hath but a necessary appearance or tendency thereunto, as much as against all inclinations or tendencies to Drunkenness, or Adultery, or Stealing, or Forswearing your self, and the like.

For a Conclusion, Let me remind you of the Advice of the *Blessed* St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians* in the like Case, where one was *for* Paul, *another for* Apollo, *and another for* Cephas, and all were in

in that reſpect, and therefore carnal) ſaying, *I have in a Figure transferred theſe things, to my ſelf and to Apollo for your ſakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of Men above that which is written, that no one of you be puft up for one againſt another: Therefore let no Man glory in Men*: 1 Cor. 4. 6.

And here Sir, I had concluded your trouble in reading theſe Lines (having already tranſgreſſed the Lines of an Epiſtle) did I not fear you might fancy I had ſome Deſign in writing ſome of theſe at leaſt, to make an Apology for the ſinfulneſs of Miniſters Lives, which God forbid; and my comfort is, that you know me better. But leſt any may hereafter become privy to theſe Papers, who may be inclined by Intereſt, Party, or Prejudice, to Judge ſo hardly; I think it therefore needful to add, that I abhor all Debauchery and Ungodlineſs in any Man, but moſt of all in a Miniſter, who hath ſo ſolemnly Conſecrated, not only his mouth, but his whole Self, Soul and Body unto God; ſo that to deſecrate or unhallow either, is an high point of Sacriledge againſt God, and a moſt grievous Scandal to the World; while all good Men are afflicted to ſee it, and all bad Men are hardned in their wicked Courſes by it. While the poor wretch in all his Preachings playeth but the Orator againſt himſelf, and each good Sermon which he makes, is but a freſh Inditement of his old wicked life. No, no, I wiſh from my heart, that every Miniſter in his reſpective place, was as St. *Paul* for his *Converſation in Heaven*, and an *Apollos* for his Eloquence in the Pulpit; that he was furniſhed with both a Mouth and Wiſdome, which Gain-ſayers were not able to contradict: I mean in few words, that he was him-

himself a living Word. This would be a means to heal our divisions, and make up those breaches amongst us, which the sins of both Preachers and Hearers keep open; and in Gods good time help to make us *of one heart and of one mind.* Amen.

Though my own sad Observation for the present, gives me to see that as yet this alone will not do it: For as much as it is too too manifest and plain, that in such places where the Ministers live every way exemplary and blameless, and are sound, laborious, and faithful in their Preaching; yet even in those places the Breaches are kept open, and the Separation continued. Whence I cannot but conclude there is something else at the bottom, besides the pretence to Religion and Reformation, which keeps men from their Duty, and at that distance one from the other: But the making *Men of one mind in an House*, as well as the working effectual grace in *Mans* heart, is a Dispensation beyond the reach and power of *Man*, and indeed is the only Prerogative of God, who seems to me to have reserved this so great a Blessing, and so much to be desired, for another World, or some other Age of this: In the mean time it is a great comfort that you and I have got thus far on our Journey, toward our longed for rest, in so much Prosperity and Peace, free and secure from all those amazing, staggering temptations of the Primitive Christians; under the good Providence of God, and gracious Protection and Sun-shine of mild, and most merciful Governours, whom God of his goodness yet preserve, notwithstanding all our frowardness and unthankfulness;

neſs; ſo as we may live to *ſee our Childrens Children, and Peace upon* Iſrael.

I have thus far gratified your preſſing importunity upon a moſt unpleaſing Subject, in compliance with my Duty to your Commands, and to exemplifie how much and how far I am to be commanded by you, who indeed am

SIR,

Aug. 28. 1684.

Your moſt humble Servant

FINIS.